

&>• 3H Character of the Norfolk Rising.

the form of a petition to the Protector. The list is a long one, and it shows that the rising was emphatically a reaction against both the hated economic policy that was ruining the country, and the system of feudal privilege and exaction that was still, in spite of modification, a source of terrible hardship to the masses of sixteenth-century England. In this Norfolk rebellion, indeed, there are features that remind of the German peasant rising a quarter of a century earlier. The English peasant of 1549, like the German peasant of 1525, was the victim of both an oppressive policy and an oppressive system which he would stand no longer, if his strong arm would avail him aught against class selfishness and traditional privilege. The nobles and squires, he complains, impose feudal burdens, such as " free rent/⁵ on the poor man, which they ought to pay themselves to their own feudal superiors. They are everywhere depriving the people of the common lands, and rack-renting their tenants. They harass and oppress the poor man by the exercise of a variety of feudal rights such as " castle-ward rent" (rent for the repair of the lord's castle in lieu of service): Besides the total suppression of the agrarian abuses, these sturdy Norfolk farmers will be content with nothing less than a clean sweep of all the oppressive customs and privileges inherited from the past. They will make an end of serfdom in any shape or form. " We pray that all bondmen may be made free, for God made all men free by His precious blood shed," They will have the rivers " free and common to all men for fishing and passage." They have, moreover, grievances against the parson as well as the squire, condemn pluralities and non-residence, and demand that parsons who cannot preach the word of God shall be deprived of their benefices. The aspiration after social emancipation was far less priest-ridden in Norfolk than in Cornwall and Yorkshire. It had evidently more sympathy with

religious reform, and had in this respect also much in common with the anti-clerical spirit of the social movement in Germany.

Somerset felt the force of these demands, and, while condemning the resort to violent courses, promised to do his best to bring about amendment by means of commission and Parliament. He offered a free pardon as an inducement to disperse. Kett and his rustic following were, however, serving the/